

“The ‘How To’ of Helping Students Incorporate Their International Experience into the Job Search and Interview Process”

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What have I gained from my experience?

Please check all that apply

Cultural Understanding and World View:

As a result of my international experience(s), I have developed:

- A greater knowledge about another culture
- Awareness of political, economic or social events around the world
- My interest in global or transnational issues
- My involvement with a global issue
- My involvement with a civic cause
- A definition of my political views
- My ability to speak a foreign language

Personal Growth and Values

My international experience(s) have helped me to grow and develop:

- My desire for more diverse friendships and social networks
- My desire to further my education (e.g., postgraduate degree)
- A better understanding of myself and my values
- My sense of confidence in new situations or when meeting new people
- My ability to accept differences in other people
- My ability to empathize with people, especially those who are different from me
- My ability to be more flexible and open-minded
- My tolerance of ambiguity in a variety of situations
- An understanding of my own strengths and weaknesses
- My ability to be independent
- My ability to take initiative

And, I have:

- Become more aware of the way I use and structure time
- An increased capacity to profit from my mistakes
- Strengthened relationships with my family members
- Strengthened relationships with my friends
- A clearer notion of what I will do with my life

Additionally:

- I am more capable of solving life's day-to-day problems
- I think more critically: I am more discriminating and skeptical
- I have improved observation skills
- I need more time to be alone
- I am more confident about the decisions I make
- Recognized the importance I put on developing my skills and talents
- An increased willingness to work hard and sacrifice in order to do well in school or in my job

Professional & Career Development

Studying Abroad contributed to:

- My ability to formulate my career goals and clarify my professional aspirations
- I am more aware of the opportunities in life that are open to me.
- Developing skills and intercultural competencies which will aid in obtaining my first job after graduation
- I have a greater willingness to take on roles and tasks to which I am unaccustomed
- The importance I place on working in a field that I find interesting
- The importance I place on having personal fulfillment in my work
- My ability to speak a foreign language in the workplace
- Developing my ability to understand an organization's culture
- My ability to adapt in diverse workplace environments
- Other things that you want to list:

CAREER PROFILE SUMMARY WORKSHEET

Instructions:

1. Complete one summary worksheet for each position or job function you are experiencing.
2. This information can vary significantly from organization to organization, even within the same function.

Name of targeted position/job function _____

Type of organization(s): _____

Skill necessary by successful people in targeted position:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Qualities possessed by successful people in targeted position:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

A typical day in the life of a person in a targeted position:

Activity	% time spent
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

POSSIBLE OUTCOMES OF AN INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

SKILLS

- Establish rapport quickly
- Function with a high level of ambiguity
- Achieve goals despite obstacles
- Take initiative and risks
- Time management skills
- Identify and solve problems
- Accept responsibility
- Communicate despite barriers
- Learn quickly
- Handle stress/difficult situations
- Language Skills
- Manage/Organize
- Lead formal and/or informal groups
- Cope with rejection, criticism, constructive feedback
- Adapt to new environments
- Understand an organization's culture
- Learn through listening and observing

QUALITIES

- Self-reliance
- High energy/enthusiasm
- Appreciation of diversity
- Perseverance
- Flexibility
- Tolerance/open-minded
- Assertiveness
- Inquisitiveness
- Self-confidence
- Self-knowledge
- Independence

EXAMPLES OF OTHER SKILLS

Analytical Skills

- Auditing
- Budgeting
- Computing
- Cost Analysis
- Critical Thinking
- Data Analysis
- Data Collection
- Decision Making
- Evaluating
- Financial Analysis
- Qualitative Analysis
- Quantitative Analysis
- Reasoning
- Research
- Reporting
- Surveying

Behavioral Skills

- Creativity
- Customer Relations
- Decision Making
- Following Instruction
- Goal Setting
- Initiative
- Integrity
- Leadership
- Motivation
- Negotiation
- Organization
- People Skills
- Persistence
- Persuasion

- Planning
- Problem Solving
- Time Management
- Training

Communication Skills

- Listening
- Summarizing
- Written
- Verbal
- Public Speaking

Hard Skills

- Proficiency in a foreign language
- A degree or certificate
- Typing speed
- Machine operation
- Computer programming

FOCUSED INTERVIEWING (Behavioral Interviewing)

When answering interview questions, recruiters are looking for concise, but descriptive responses. Focused interviewing techniques are often used by interviewers to draw out information from the candidate. If you are able to respond with a “STAR,” your responses will be concise and descriptive and the interview session will proceed more effectively.

What is a STAR?

S – Describe the specific setting or **situation** for which the experience took place.

Example: While studying abroad in Germany, I found that my coursework was extremely different from what I was accustomed to at the University of Minnesota. I was used to having assignments due throughout the semester, but for my German courses the entire grade was based on the final with no accountability beforehand.

T – Describe the specific **task** or project related to the skill sought.

Example: During that semester, I was taking a full load of coursework for my major, and I was really motivated to do well during my semester abroad. I knew I had to figure out a way to stay on top of all the information I was learning because it would be impossible to do well at the end of the semester if I left studying all to the end.

A – Describe the specific steps or **actions** you took to complete the task or project.

Example: I had to act as a self-starter, and I set out a structured study plan for myself for the entire semester. I formed small study groups with about 4-5 classmates for each of my classes, and we'd meet over coffee once a week.

R – Describe the **results** or outcomes resulting from the actions taken.

Example: I developed strong time management skills because of the new type of academic setting I experienced in Germany. Because I kept up with my study plan throughout the semester, I ended up earning A's and B's in my classes, and I was able to keep my stress level down before final exams.

This is a typical STAR answer. It could be the answer to, “Give me an example of an accomplishment you are proud of.” If someone asked, “What’s your greatest skill?” you might answer, “I believe I can set goals and meet them,” and then give a story like the one above. Or, if the interviewer says, “Why should we hire you?” you can respond, “I am a good problem solver, for instance...” and give an example like the one above.

Can you see how having an example like this gives you more credibility than if you merely state “I can set goals and meet them,” or “I am a problem solver?”

The interview is your chance to speak to your qualities and qualifications; knowing what you want to say before you even enter the interviewer’s office can be a helpful tool in assuring that you’ll be able to do that. Having some STAR stories prepared in advance can help you be sure you don’t believe until the employer knows all you want him or her to about who you are and what you have to offer his or her organization

See additional examples on page 7.

SAMPLE STORY #1

I learned how to take initiative and problem-solve in in a class I took abroad in England. The format was very different from what I was used to in the States. There was no syllabus and we received a very long reading list instead. There were mostly lectures given and not much discussion or interaction.

At first I was really worried because it's not how I was used to learning. But instead of panicking, I tried to examine the differences from a more 'outside' perspective. I realized that if the British students managed in this system, I likely could as well.

I figured out that by asking my classmates a few questions about what was expected of us, by identifying and focusing on several of the key texts the instructor referenced and by committing to study time each week even though I wasn't required to submit any work, I could keep up and succeed in the course. The final exam was a bit daunting, but I ended up doing quite well in the course. I realize now that I not only learned a lot about the subject area, but about my own learning styles and my ability to take initiative and succeed when challenged as well.

Note: Showing cultural respect is important. Note how this story doesn't log any complaints about the system abroad. It speaks respectfully, in descriptive terms about the differences.

SAMPLE STORY #2

I lived in a homestay during my semester in Spain. From this situation, I learned how to consider and respect different viewpoints and that it is possible to become very close to people with very different opinions than my own.

At first, it was a bit of a strain to communicate fully with just about anyone in the household. The host mother was sweet and used a lot of sign language with me. My host sister did speak a bit of English, but it was my host father who wanted to talk the most with me, and at first I was very challenged by my developing language skills.

Even more challenging was that he wanted to engage me in discussions on world politics, especially about U.S. foreign policy. He wasn't happy about the U.S. influence in the world and asked me questions that honestly, I wasn't prepared to answer.

I felt so ignorant with my limited language skill and by not knowing the specifics about the foreign policies of my own country. I faced this challenge head-on: I made a point to read the Spanish newspaper each day so that I could acquire both the knowledge and the vocabulary. Over time, I got pretty good at being able to engage in discussion with him. We had quite different viewpoints on a number of things, but his approach was not to insult but to challenge me respectfully.

I respect him for this, and I am grateful for the opportunity to see political discourse as an exercise in learning and not demeaning anyone. I am very close with everyone in my homestay and am still in touch with them.

Note: Carefully consider whether you think it's a good idea to reveal your political party preferences in a job interview. This story does not 'call' either point of view by a name. While perhaps the listener could speculate on the political orientation of the storyteller, it still leaves room for ambiguity.

TIPS FOR THE TRAINER TO SHARE WITH STUDENTS

- **Have 10-12 stories ready when you go into any job interview.**
 - real-life experience stories from which you learned or accomplished
 - acquired a new or reinforced an existing skill or positive quality
- **Include at least a few stories from your semester or travels abroad.**
 - profound learning and the unique experiences make great examples
- **Your time abroad has a certain ‘shelf life’ for greatest relevance, and you should use it to your advantage.**
 - stories are highly relevant upon your return and for at least awhile after graduating.
- **Don’t have all of your stories be from your time abroad!** show balance
- **A good way to build your collection of stories is to think about times when you have been especially challenged or taken a risk.**
 - Might be about something that happened on a given day (“one time”)
 - Or a situation that happened *over time* (you were challenged by the differences in the education system abroad).
- **Give it a beginning and an end** while making a relevant point and specifically identifying the skill or quality it demonstrates.
- **Don’t bother with too much detail** – for example, if your story is about a missed flight or train, no need to call out the flight numbers or the exact departure times!
- **Be sure to show respect for cultural differences.** No matter how challenging don’t want to use denigrating terms. Instead of saying your room was ‘ridiculously small’ you need to explain that the room was ‘much smaller than you were used to.’
- **Stories need to be appropriate.** When in doubt, err on the side of caution. Be aware that even though you now understand that having a drink with friends in a pub is a common ‘no-big-deal’ occurrence in Ireland, you may want to eliminate any reference to pubs, bars or alcohol in your stories since your interviewer may not have that same frame of reference.

Add your own advice to students here:

PREPARING “STARS” FOR YOUR INTERVIEW

Skills/Traits

STAR

1.

S:

T:

A:

R:

2.

S:

T:

A:

R:

3.

S:

T:

A:

R:

4.

S:

T:

A:

R:

5.

S:

T:

A:

R:

DESIRED SKILLS – ENTRY LEVEL JOBS

- Communication skills
- Interpersonal skills
- Teamwork skills
- Flexibility/Adaptability
- Initiative/Work Ethic
- Analytical skills
- Detail-Oriented
- Leadership skills
- Technical skills

CROSS CULTURAL SKILLS

This list shows a skill set that includes some very likely to be developed from an international experience . . . students can determine what overlaps with their own skills and what employers are looking for, etc.

- Tolerance for Ambiguity
- Sense of Humor
- Warmth in Human Relationships
- Motivation
- Self-Reliance
- Low goal/Task orientation
- Strong Self-Awareness
- Tolerance of Differences
- Open-Mindedness
- Perceptiveness
- Non-judgmentalness
- Empathy
- Communicativeness
- Ability to Fail
- Flexibility/Adaptability
- Curiosity

HOW TO PREPARE YOUR ONE-LINE RESPONSE TO “TELL ME ABOUT YOUR SEMESTER IN...”

When you find yourself an interview, networking or talking to grandma – it is typical for them to ask ‘small questions’ such as...”Oh, I see you spent a semester studying in Spain, how was that?” When they do...are you ready? You need to be prepared to respond with a concise and meaningful response – more than just “it was awesome.” Instead, try responding with...”My experience in Spain was one of personal transformation. While studying Spanish Art History through the Universitat de Barcelona and volunteering as an archivist at Museu d'Història de la Ciutat, the city museum of Barcelona I discovered my true passion of Art History and archiving as well as my ability to engage and communicate with diverse cultures.”

THE “ELEVATOR PITCH”

You never get a second chance to make a good first impression. That’s why you need to be able to introduce yourself and answer the question “tell me about yourself” clearly and concisely. You may use your elevator pitch when you are networking prior to your actual job search; or to answer “tell me about yourself” during the job interview.

KEY COMPONENTS

- Introduction
- Education; professional development
- Work experience; key accomplishments
- Transferable skills, if necessary
- Current status; what you have to offer
- Employment opportunities you are seeking
- *Length – 30 seconds to max of 2 minutes*

USES FOR YOUR INFOMERCIAL

- Response to “tell me about yourself” during job interview
- In any situation when you are making “networking” connections
- Portions can be used on your resume
- Increase confidence as you introduce yourself
- Script when making “cold” telephone calls
- When requesting informational interviews or advice

NETWORKING EXAMPLE: *(use only as a guide – create your own, specific to your situation)*

Thanks so much for being willing to speak with me. My name is Jane Jobseeker, and Nan Networker gave me your name as someone who might have information for me about the field of bioethics, in which I am very interested.

In May I will be graduating from the University of Minnesota’s School of Public Health with an MPH in Public Health Administration and Policy. While in school, I worked as a research assistant, and I am especially proud of the fact that I presented a poster presentation on tobacco use prevention at the ASPH conference last year.

As I mentioned, I am exploring information about the field of bioethics, with a goal of combining my skills and education working in a small non-profit. I have a few questions about your position and this agency and wonder if you could tell me a little about what you do and what it is like to work here.

INTERVIEWING EXAMPLE: *(use only as a guide – create your own, specific to your situation)*

First, thank you for this opportunity to interview with you today. As you know from my resume and cover letter, my undergraduate degree is in Biology, and I graduated with honors from the University of Wisconsin at Madison. I became interested in public health while I was volunteering at a community clinic, and realized how prevalent the issue of health disparities is.

I enrolled in the University of Minnesota’s School of Public Health, and in May, I will be graduating with an MPH in Community Health Promotion. While in school and through my community service activities, I developed skills and strengths both in research and public speaking – especially presenting educational sessions on a variety of health issues to diverse populations. I am especially proud of the fact that one of the sessions I designed and created was so popular, I have been asked to present it to several more groups.

One of the reasons I am excited about interviewing for your agency is that it has such a great reputation, and the position sounds both challenging and like a perfect fit for my skills.

SCRIPTING YOUR INTRODUCTION

The script for your introduction will depend on how you plan to use it. Think about your specific situation, (cold call, informational interview, job interview) and then create a script that you feel comfortable using:

Introduction: (Who are you? Who referred you? Thank the person for seeing/interviewing you. What area of interest brings you here?)

Say a little bit about your education, specific skills, and an accomplishment of which you are proud:

What is your current status? What is your goal for this meeting?

[Remember – be concise! Two minutes max!]

Remember to thank your contact for his / her time. Follow up with a thank you note.



HOW TO MARKET YOUR SKILLS

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Resume and Cover Letter | <input type="checkbox"/> The employment interview |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Informational interviewing | <input type="checkbox"/> Community service |
| <input type="checkbox"/> LinkedIn (or other social media) | <input type="checkbox"/> Blogging |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Professional associations / conferences | <input type="checkbox"/> Networking |